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opening extract from

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THIS IS THE JOURNAL OF

Jake Carpenter

I begin on the twenty-third day of September in the year 1716. It is the third year of the reign of our good King George, and the tenth of my life.

FOR AS LONG as I can remember, I have lived in the village of Holyoak, North Carolina. My family came to the American colonies from England. I knew not my mother, for she died when I was yet a baby. My father, a medical doctor, raised me with the help of his two sisters. From them I learned my letters. This was my only schooling.

Now, though, my life is to change, for I am to GO TO SEA! My father wants me to study medicine but

believes I should see more of the world first. Thus I am to become a SAILOR – at least for a while.

His plan is that I should join his brother, Will, who is already a seaman. My father sent a letter to the owner of Will's ship, who agreed to take me on the crew.

Now the ship has docked and Will has come to fetch me. He is a fine man. He has the same face as my father, but his hands are larger and rough to the touch. Whenever he is ashore he comes to see us, bringing strange gifts and wondrous yarns. My aunts laugh and call them "when-I-was" tales, for this is how they always begin.

Will has told me of sea monsters, mermaids, and of floating islands made of ice. He has seen a whirlpool, sailed through a hurricane and escaped from pirates. And soon I am to see all of these things FOR MYSELF.

I write this on my last day at home, for tomorrow I shall return with my Uncle Will to his ship, the *Sally Anne*.

Monday 24th

This morn Will woke me before sun-up. He bid me fetch my belongings, but laughed out loud when I did. "Fie, man!" he snorted. "Do you think we are going to sea in a tailor's shop?" With this he emptied half the clothes from my bag. Seeing my glum face, he told me they were the clothes of a landsman. (This, he explained, is what sailors call those who are used to a life ashore.) "Such finery is no use on a ship, and there's precious little space aboard to stow 'em."

Thus lightly loaded we set off at dawn. My father clapped me upon the shoulder, wished me luck and bid Will take care of me. My aunts both hugged me and dabbed my eyes with their aprons (though they would have better dabbed their own, which needed it more).

The journey to Charleston took us all the day and I most eagerly desired to see the sea. When we arrived I said to Will that I had expected the ocean to be bigger, for I thought I spied the other shore in the distance.

"Nay, Jake!" he laughed in reply. "This here is but a wide river. The open ocean is three leagues east and is far too big to see across."

Our inn for the night is a mean and grimy place. Even the straw mattresses are lumpy and dusty.

Tuesday 25th

Today we had some ill luck when we went to join our ship. We were yet two streets away from the quayside when Will stopped suddenly. He gazed up at the masts that towered above the houses. "She's not there," he gasped, pointing upwards. "The *Sally Anne*! Her masthead is gone!" With this he dropped his bag and, forgetting me, raced to the waterside.

When I caught up with him, he was sitting gloomily with the harbour master. He told Will his ship had found a cargo sooner than expected and had sailed on the evening tide. I was sorely disappointed. Forcing a smile, Will said, "Never mind, Jake. Our luck will change."

This Journal, being the diary of myself, Tobias Burgess, begins this day, the 2nd of January, in the year of Our Lord, 1285.

I write these words at my home in the parish of Saltington. Here I dwell with my father Henry, my mother Gwynedd, and my two younger sisters Edythe and Sian.

But soon I shall be leaving here, for I am to spend the next twelvemonth (and more, I hope) as a page at the castle of my father's elder brother, John Burgess, Baron of Strandborough.

My uncle has expected me these past two years, but my mother wept and would not let me go. In just two days, though, I shall be eleven years of age, and my father says I can wait no longer. At last I am to be taught the

skills and duties I must know to become a squire and even, mayhap, a knight – if my father can afford it!

My mother bids me write this journal so that I will remember all that passes, and can tell her of it when I see her next. For though Strandborough Castle is not twenty miles distant, 'tis most difficult country to cross and, as few people journey that way, news from there is scarce.

Now all that stops me is the weather, for the snow lies so thickly on the ground that the roads can barely be seen, let alone travelled upon! The delay tries both my patience and that of Hugh, my father's servant, whose task it is to deliver me to Strandborough. Though I shall be sad to leave my family (except for my sister Sian, who vexes me daily), I scarce can wait to begin my new life.

January 10th, Wednesday

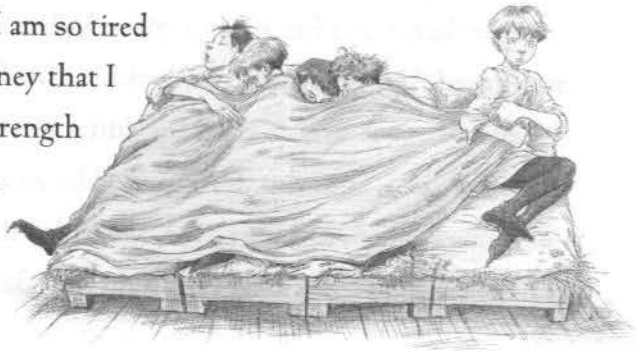
Our arrival made me feel most grand, for when we were yet some distance away the watchman did spy us out and sound his horn, and my cousin Simon rode out to greet

us. Simon is full-grown and soon to be a knight, but I was greatly pleased to see him as he was kind to me when last he visited my father.

We entered the castle through a great gateway and into the Bailey beyond – my father's manor house, and his stables, would fit easily in this huge courtyard.

At the far end stands a strong tower house called the Keep. Within the Keep is the Great Hall, which is used for eating and other gatherings. The family live in newer dwellings built against the South Wall. Here Simon showed me where I would sleep and left me. I am to share my room with three other pages. We sleep on wooden pallets with mattresses of straw, like at home.

I confess I am so tired from the journey that I barely have strength to write these words.



January 11th, Thursday

I awoke this morning early and had chance to observe the other pages while they slept. The one who woke next shared some bread with me. He told me his name was Mark and asked me mine. As we ate he pointed at the other sleeping pages, and laughed: "See Toby – Oliver and Humphrey shall have no bread, for they slumber still."

Soon Simon came to take me to the Great Hall, where my Aunt Elizabeth sat by a huge fire. She welcomed me fondly and told me that my uncle attends the King in the west of the country, but will return in a few days.

Then my aunt bade me greet my other cousins, Simon's sisters, Abigail and Beth. Abigail, who is the fairer of face, is younger than I, and her sister is older. When we were introduced Abigail blushed and looked at me from the tail of her eye. "Toby is here to learn the duties of a page," my aunt told them, "but this day I would like you to show him our home." Then, turning to me, she added that on the morrow I would learn what I must do to make myself useful.

